DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 121 393 JC 760 236

TITLE	Through the Open Door; A Study of Persistence and Performance in California's Community Colleges. Report 3: The Other Side of Persistence.
INSTITUTION	California State Coordinating Council for Higher Education, Sacramento.
REPORT NO	Council R-74-2
PUB DATE	Feb 74
NOTE	19p.; For related documents, see ED 086 286 and 287, JC 760 144 and 237; Occasional light print
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS	Community Colleges; *Dropouts; Junior Colleges; *Junior College Students; Longitudinal Studies; *Persistence; *State Surveys; Student Characteristics; *Withdrawal
IDENTIFIERS	*California

ABSTRACT

This report, part three of a long-range study of persistence and performance in California's community colleges, presents rates of non-persistence for the sample of 35,000 students during 1972-73, their first year of enrollment. About 18 percent of the new students enrolled for credit withdrew from all classes before the end of the fall term. An additional 22 percent completed the first term, but did not continue into the spring term. Only 8 percent of the students who persisted into the spring term withdrew from all classes before the ned of their first year. About 20 percent of the fall withdrawals reenrolled in the spring, and one-third of these withdrew a second time. Full-time students exhibited significantly higher rates of persistence to the end of the term than part-time students. Students with prior experience at another institution displayed somewhat lower rates of persistence than first-time students, as did the women in the sample, compared to men. The representation of minority students in the groups of non-persisters was about equal to their representation in the total sample. A large portion of the students completing only one term were fairly successful academically, as measured by grades, particularly students with prior college attendance. Four tables of data are presented. (Author/NHM)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED121393

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Council Report 74-2
February 1974

3

The Other Side of Persistence

THROUGH THE OPEN DOOR

A Study of Persistence and Performance in California's Community Colleges

JC 760 236

Prepared by the staff of the
Coordinating Council for Higher Education

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Members of the Advisory Committee ii

I. Introduction 1

II. Discussion of Findings 3

Table 1. Rates of First Year Non-Persistence for First-Time Freshmen and Transfer Students, by Part-Time and Full-Time Status . . . 5

Table 2. Rates of First-Year Non-Persistence for New Day and Evening Students by Sex 7

Table 3. Distribution of Grade-Point Averages Earned by Students Who Discontinued After One Term, by Enrollment and Admissions Status 10

Table 4. Distribution of Ages of Total Enrollment and First-Year Non-Persisters, by Enrollment Status 12

Other Student Characteristics 13

The Cost of Non-Completed Courses 13

III. Summary and Conclusions 14

Appendix A. California Community Colleges Participating in the Study, Together With Sizes of Samples and Campus Coordinators

Members of the Advisory Committee to the Persistence and Performance Study of Community College Students
Fall 1973

Mrs. Lorine Aughinbaugh
Assistant Dean of Research
American River College

Mr. Wilfred Bonnelame
Dean of Student Personnel
Merritt College

Mr. Karl O. Breuel
Superintendent
Contra Costa Community College
District

Dr. Lyle Gateley
Director of Admissions
University of California

Mrs. Portia P. Goode
Board of Trustees
Grossmont Community College
District

Dr. William Lannom
Assistant to Superintendent for
Instruction and Services
Ventura County Community College
District

Dr. Emmett Long
Coordinator, Relations with Schools
and Colleges
California State University and
Colleges

Dr. Thomas McMillan
Dean of Student Personnel Services
Mendocino County Community College

Dr. Leland L. McAdoo
Professor of Higher Education, Emt.
University of California, Berkeley

Dr. Dale Miller
President
Shasta College

Mr. John Riordan
Board of Trustees
San Francisco Community College
District

Dr. Charles McIntyre
Director of Analytical Studies
California Community Colleges

Dr. Robert E. Swanson
Superintendent/President
Cabrillo Community College District

Coordinating Council Staff

Owen Albert Knorr, Director
Robert L. Harris, Chief, Student, Faculty and Staff Affairs
Dorothy H. Knoell, Project Director
Susanna Velasco, Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

This is the third report of the study of persistence and performance in Kentucky's community colleges, which the Council staff began last fall at the request of the Legislature. Senate Bill 153, authored by Senators John Rose and passed by the Legislature during the 1972 session, called for a study of Kentucky College students through 1973, with a final report to be made to the Legislature in January 1974. The scope of the study, which is an extension of an earlier report, included:

1. Characteristics of students in various types of programs;

2. Persistence rates by field of study;

3. Factors associated with persistence;

4. Employability of students not completing associate programs;

5. Reasons for postsecondary education; and

6. The more general problem of the need for additional education.

Students entering a sample of 12 Community Colleges in the fall of 1969 (FY) at both the freshman and transfer levels constitute the pool from which data have been drawn for previous study. A series of publications briefly reporting particular aspects of the inquiry is planned for the next few months, together with annual progress reports and a final report to the Legislature.

B. Purpose of Report 3

Report 3, the third FTE of Kentucky, presents rates of non-persistence for the cohort of 10,208 students during their first year of enrollment. Succeeding data for second year and beyond will be drawn which be subsequent studies. The present analysis includes the following persistence patterns: (1) withdrawal from all classes during the term before the attendance dependency count date; (2) completion of the fall term but non-enrollment in the spring term, (3) withdrawal during the fall and re-enrollment in the spring term, and (4) a combination during the spring term to eliminate the two withdrawal earlier and re-enrollment.

Rates of withdrawal during the fall term and non-enrollment in the spring term have been computed for men-vs and full-time students who qualify as first-time freshmen at two-year colleges for the fall 1972 cohort. In addition, the same types of data have been collected for part and evening students. The part and more extensive. Considerations of program-related persistence have been prepared for students who entered with the fall term, suggestions made for possible future use in forecasting and transfer programs. Characteristics of the more the various subcohorts of non-persistors have also been prepared. The most persistent are also described in terms of selected personal characteristics.

The concept of non-persistence does not imply failure on the part of the students or the colleges. Council staff made the decision to examine in this report the

Bibliography 1
Appendix A 2
Appendix B 3

[illegible]

Subject: [illegible]

[illegible]

The [illegible] according to Table 1 are statistically [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Q. [illegible]

A. [illegible]

Q. [illegible]

A. [illegible]

3b. Do freshman and transfer student non-persisters differ with respect to grades earned during the first term?

Answer: Non-persisting students with prior college experience earned first-term grade-point averages which were significantly higher than those of first-time freshmen who did not persist beyond the first term. The freshmen earned a mean grade-point average slightly above C, while that earned by the transfer students was C+ (2.65). The difference in grade-point means may be attributable to the larger difference in the percentages earning averages of B (3.0) and above than those earning averages below D (1.0). Furthermore, more first-time freshman than transfer students earned averages between 1.5 and 2.9 (31 percent compared with 22 percent).

The most interesting comparison of the two groups of non-persisters involves the percentages with grades below D, that is, at a level which would result in early dismissal. Among the first-time freshmen who completed the fall term but did not enroll for spring, 29 percent of the averages fell into this range, compared with only 17 percent of the averages of transfer students who discontinued after the fall term. In fact, 28 percent of the full-time freshmen who discontinued after one term earned grade-point averages in this lowest range. The latter group appears to deserve a high priority for further study.

3c. Are the grade point averages earned by part-time students similar to those earned by full-time students?

Answer: The mean grade-point averages of part-time students were slightly higher than those of full-time students in both the first-time and transfer student categories. The difference is not notable at the upper end of the grade distribution, where a significantly larger percentage of part-time students earned grade-point averages above B. Many were enrolled in a single course for which they received a grade of A. At the other extreme, the percentages of part-time and full-time non-persisters with averages below D were very similar for the first-time and transfer student groups. Also for both groups, the variance in grade-point averages was considerably larger for the full-time than the part-time non-persisters. The larger variance is a natural concomitant of the larger number of credits on which the grade-point averages of the full-time students are based.

Table 3

Distribution of Grade-Point Averages Earned by Students Who Discontinued After One Term, by Enrollment and Admissions Status*

Grade-Point Average	Part-Time		Full-Time		Total		
	Freshman	Transfer	Freshman	Transfer	Freshman	Transfer	Total
3.0 - 4.0	37%	59%	21%	46%	34%	58%	43%
2.5 - 2.9	4	3	15	15	7	5	6
2.0 - 2.4	20	16	23	15	21	16	19
1.5 - 1.9	2	<1	7	5	3	1	3
1.0 - 1.4	7	3	6	3	6	3	5
Below 1.0	30	18	28	16	29	17	24
Mean	2.12	2.66	1.98	2.55	2.08	2.65	2.31

* No grades are awarded to students who withdraw during the term.

TABLE 4. Distribution of Ages of Total Enrollment and First-Year Non-Persisters, by Enrollment Status

Overview

Age was expected to be positively correlated with rates of non-persistence because of the differing objectives of recent high school graduates and middle-aged and older students, particularly those with prior college experience. The relationship, if found, might also be attributable to differences in the enrollment status of young and older students, enrolled for full-time versus part-time loads. The relationship between age and persistence is important in projecting future enrollments and needs for educational programs, particularly at this time, when the Community Colleges appear to be attracting a larger proportion of older students.

Questions and Answers for Table 4

4a. What is the size and nature of the relationship between age and persistence?

Answer: Age and persistence are positively related but the size of the correlation is not as large as expected. Students who were 18 years of age or less when they entered the Community College produced comparatively few non-persisters, particularly in the group which was enrolled on a full-time basis. On the other hand, full-time students in the age category of 19 to 21 produced a comparatively high percentage of non-persisters. Part-time students in this age category contributed somewhat less than their expected share of non-persisters, based on their percentage of the total part-time enrollment.

In all age categories over 21, for both part-time and full-time students, the percentage of non-persisters was slightly higher than the percentage of the total enrollment in the same category. An exception is the part-time student group at least 35 years of age which produced a relatively large percentage of non-persisters (21 percent of the non-persisters, compared with 13 percent of the total part-time enrollments).

The most significant relationship involves the full-time students between the ages of 19 and 21, who appear to be discontinuing their enrollment in relatively large numbers after one semester.

4b. Do the students who withdraw from all classes during the term differ with respect to age from those who complete the term and discontinue their enrollment?

Answer: This type of difference related to age is most marked for full-time students, with a significantly lower percentage of withdrawals than completers who discontinued among those 18 years of age or less, and a significantly higher rate of withdrawals among those between the ages of 19 and 24. The data seem to suggest that some young adults who have been out of school for one or two years before attending Community College find it difficult to carry a full-time course load and thus withdraw from all classes without penalty. Differences between part-time students in the two categories of non-persistence do not appear to be significant, except perhaps in the age group over 35, which experienced a high rate of discontinuance after one term.

Table 4

Distribution of Ages of Total Enrollment and First-Year Non-Persisters, by Enrollment Status*
(in percents)

Age	Total Enrollment			Non-Persisters								
				Fall Withdrawals			Others**			Total		
	PT	FT	Total	PT	FT	Total	PT	FT	Total	PT	FT	Total
18 & Under	20%	62%	30%	17%	30%	19%	16%	44%	22%	17%	38%	21%
19 - 21	27	18	20	22	37	24	18	32	22	20	34	23
22 - 24	16	9	13	16	16	16	14	11	13	15	13	14
25 - 29	15	5	14	17	10	16	17	7	15	17	8	15
30 - 34	9	2	8	9	3	8	11	3	9	10	3	9
35 & Over	13	4	15	19	4	17	24	3	19	21	4	18

* Part-time (PT) students were enrolled for fewer than 12 units, full-time (FT) for 12 or more units.

** Students who completed the fall term but did not enroll for the spring term.

Other Student Characteristics

The relationship between marital status and persistence was explored in the course of seeking sources of variance in persistence rates. The percentages of married students in the groups who withdrew during the fall term and discontinued at the end of the term were found to be significantly higher than the percentages of married students in the total sample. The difference was much larger for women than for men, with 50 percent of the female non-persisters married (or formerly so), compared with only 28 percent in the total sample studied. Thirty-nine percent of the male non-persisters were married when they first registered at the Community College, compared with only 26 percent in the total male sample.

Married students tend to be older than unmarried students and to enroll for lighter course loads. Thus the relationship between marital status and persistence is rather complex, since part-time students, generally, have lower rates of persistence than full-time students. In any case, it appears that married students, particularly women, have a much lower probability of persistence through the first year of their enrollment than unmarried students in the Community College.

Percentages of minority group students among those who withdrew during and discontinued after the fall term were obtained, for comparison with the percentages of minority students in the total sample. The percentages were similar. Minority students constituted 22 percent of the total sample studied and 20 percent of the non-persisters for the fall 1972 term. The same percentage was found for men and women. The percentage of minority students who withdrew during the term was slightly higher than the percentage which discontinued after the term (22 and 18 percent, respectively). Thus minority group students do not appear to differ significantly from other students with respect to their rates of persistence in their first year of enrollment.

The Cost of Non-Completed Courses

It is impossible to assess the benefits accruing to students who withdrew from all classes or persist through the term, only to lose credits for courses which are not completed satisfactorily. However, the costs to the State and the community are the same for credits earned and units attempted for which no credit is awarded. Therefore, a comparison of the credits earned and the units attempted by non-persisters is of some interest. Colleges were instructed to report data on units attempted in the fourth census week, thus eliminating early withdrawals for which no state support is provided. The ratio of units attempted to units completed by students who withdrew during or did not persist beyond the first term of enrollment was found to be 3 to 1 for the sample studied. The ratio for the students who completed the fall term but did not persist was found to be 1.7 units attempted for each unit completed. The latter ratio does not take into account the units attempted by students who withdrew from all classes with no credit earned.

Further attention will be given to the ratios of units attempted to credit earned in a subsequent report. The ratio for students who persist through the first year and beyond is not yet available, nor is the distribution of grade-point averages for persisters. However, the magnitude of the early non-persisters makes them worthy of independent analysis.

Summary and Conclusions

Report 3 presents rates of non-persistence during and at the close of the first term of enrollment for the sample of 31,000 students in 32 Community Colleges which has been selected for study. The sample enrolled in the 32 colleges for the first time in the fall 1971 term and was still enrolled during the fourth (census) week. It includes first-time freshmen and transfer students, part-time and full-time enrollees, and both day and evening students. Students not enrolled for credit were excluded from the sample because of the paucity of information about them in the college records. Rates of non-persistence are presented for various sub-groups in the sample, together with information about grade-point averages, marital status, and racial-ethnic background. Comparisons with persisting students will appear in subsequent reports.

About 10 percent of the two students enrolled for credit withdrew from all classes after the census week but before the end of the fall term. An additional 23 percent completed the first term but did not continue into the spring term. However, nearly one-fourth of the latter group of non-persisters earned no credit for the term they completed. Only 8 percent of the students who persisted into the spring term withdrew from all classes before the end of their first year of enrollment. On the other hand, about one out of five among the fall entry-sample reenrolled in the spring, and one out of three withdrew from all classes a second time. Full-time students exhibited significantly higher rates of persistence to the end of the term than did part-time students. Students with prior experience at another institution displayed somewhat lower rates of persistence through the first term than first-time students, as did the women in the sample, compared with men. The representation of minority students in the groups of non-persisters was about equal to their representation in the total sample. As might be expected, rates of discontinuance for evening students were significantly higher than those obtained for day students, particularly among the women.

Forty-three percent of the students who discontinued at the end of the first term earned grade-point averages of 0 or below. At the other extreme, 24 percent of the students who discontinued after one term received grade-point averages of 3 or below, and an additional 9 percent earned grades below C but above B. Thus about one-third of the students who completed only one term would probably have been in academic difficulty if they had persisted. The mean grade-point average of first-time freshmen who discontinued after one term was significantly lower than that of students with prior college experience. Forty-one percent of the full-time freshmen earned grade-point averages below C for the first term.

Full-time students entering Community Colleges directly after high school exhibited a higher rate of persistence than students who were out of school for a year or two. Part-time students at least 35 years of age also exhibited rates of non-persistence which were somewhat higher than those found for other groups over 21 years of age.

Using grade-point averages of at least B as a standard, we may conclude that a large portion of the students completing only one term have had a successful experience at the Community College, particularly students with prior college attendance. At the same time, the large groups of first-time students who stopped after one term with very poor grades constitute a problem. Are their poor grades the result of lack of aptitude for the program attempted? Low motivation? poor guidance? or other reasons? Many colleges would have permitted

[illegible] allowing students to enroll for a second term, but they might find it difficult to [illegible] their cumulative grade-point average to the level required to [illegible] maintain satisfactory academic progress. In effect, if they were full-time students when they received their low grades, [illegible] they were [illegible] students when they [illegible] those grades.

The rather large values of attrition/mobility [illegible] during the [illegible] academic year [illegible] a problem for the community colleges. [illegible] maintenance of [illegible] enrollment [illegible] attrition/mobility [illegible] grades but took F's and F's before the attempt [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the previous use of performance grades. We do not have [illegible] of F grades represent unsatisfactory performance, what proportion are given at students who [illegible] F's [illegible] to complete the work in the course, and what proportion of the grade [illegible] students who took withdraw for reasons beyond their control. Both sets of [illegible] drawn from the class to show targets achieved for the typical group [illegible] [illegible] level of performance on the rate of withdrawal. If there [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] objective of the receipt of unsatisfactory grades, we can conclude that the college [illegible] have a problem with respect to the ability of some students to attain satisfactority in their chosen programs. On the other hand, if [illegible] [illegible] satisfactory, and if students withdraw because they have an [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] experience or on the efficacy of present academic bookkeeping practices can be [illegible] indicated. In any case, the ratio of units attempted to units satisfactorily [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] penalizers was found to be 3 to 1, that is, there were three attempted for each [illegible] earned.

We conclude that non-persistence must not be equated with failure. Groups of the large proportion of students with high grades who appear to have a similar [illegible] objectives in a single term. More generally, we conclude that no [illegible] [illegible] or discontinuance is a concise phenomena that needs to be examined further in the multi-faceted context of student motives, institutional procedures, and the State's [illegible].

Prospectus

Two reports are planned for the first quarter of 1971 which will present [illegible] of data collected for the first year of operation. The first of [illegible] [illegible] more detailed analysis of student performance than was possible in [illegible]. The performance of the non-persisters studied in Report 1 will be [illegible] with that of students who completed the first year, in terms of both grade-[illegible] [illegible] and rates of units attempted and completed. Persistence rates in [illegible] [illegible] year or enrollment will also be compared.

The second of the two reports will present an analysis of the factors [illegible] and reasons by which the students were selected initially, by questionnaire [illegible] [illegible] enrollment status, and where such information is available, i.e. the relative [illegible] persistence of students with respect to transfer and the pursuit of [illegible] [illegible] certificates. The progress and objectives of the non-persisters [illegible] in Report 1 will be compared with those of the students who continued their enrollment [illegible] but at least two semesters.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]